



News Release

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Keep Kids Safe In and Around Cars

UDOH Urges Caution During Hot Summer Months

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Summer can be a deadly time of year for children. With the recent death of an infant left alone in a car, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is pleading with parents to be especially careful with their children this summer.

Despite all the warnings, an average of 33 children died each year in the U.S. from 1998-2004 from heatstroke after being left unattended in cars. Most of the deaths occurred when parents or caregivers left the child in a parked car. Some resulted when children climbed into an unlocked car on their own and couldn't get out.

“As tempting as it may be to leave a child in a parked vehicle for a quick errand, it's simply too risky,” said Jenny Johnson, Media and Education Coordinator with the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “Even a few minutes in a hot car can be deadly for a small child.”

Cracking a window to let air in does little to protect kids from heat buildup in a parked car. On a 78 degree day, temperatures inside a car can climb to 100 degrees in just three minutes. After six to eight minutes, the temperature can reach over 125 degrees. A body temperature of 107 degrees is lethal. A child's core body temperature can increase three to five times faster than an adult's.

In addition, 41 children under the age of 10 died after being hit or run over in a driveway from 1997-2006 in Utah. More than half of these children were struck or run over by a family member.

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“Many of these deaths were preventable, had extra caution been taken by the drivers to 'Spot the Tot,' said Safe Kids Utah vice president Janet Brooks, speaking of the group's successful Spot the Tot safety campaign. “Just walking around the vehicle before pulling out or backing up to make sure no one is behind or in front of the vehicle may save a child's life.”

Follow these tips to protect your little ones this summer:

- Never leave a child alone in a car, even with the windows down.
- Teach children not to play in or around cars.
- Always lock car doors and trunks – even at home or in the garage.
- Watch children closely, especially when loading and unloading the vehicle.
- Get into the habit of checking the back seats for infants and toddlers. Put a reminder near the driver's seat or place something that you will need at your next stop – a purse, your lunch, gym bag or briefcase – on the floor of the backseat where the child is sitting.
- Always secure children properly in child safety or booster seats in the back seat.
- Always check completely around any vehicle before pulling or backing out.

“We all need to be more vigilant in supervising children. These tragedies can happen to anyone and taking a little extra care can go a long way,” said Johnson.

To learn more about keeping kids safe this summer, visit <http://health.utah.gov/vipp>.

If you or someone you care about has been affected by safety issues in and around cars, we want to hear from you. Share your story with the Utah Health Story Bank at <http://health.utah.gov/bhp/sb/>. By sharing your story, you can increase awareness of these issues and encourage others to keep children safe.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.